/38/

Maize (Zea mays L.): Succeeds well when sown at the beginning of the winter season. The native species sown under these conditions is very beautiful and gives large yellow ears, very well filled out. The Africans eat fresh roasted corn, and, when it is hard, they make couscous of it. The infusion prepared with the fruit is emollient and diuretic. The styles or stigmas of maize are famous as diuretics and cure several ailments of the urinary tract (cystitis, gravel, dysuria, etc.); the young kernels, when cooked, constitute an excellent vegetable and replace peas; the flour gives a beer and an alcoholic extract. The husks of the ears serve to make quite springy mattresses.

II. -- Useful Gramineae

(not being subject to any cultivation)

Bamboo. -- Grows in the wild state in the Ravin des Voleurs /Ravine of Thieves/ near Thiès. The native species is rather small. Stakes, frames, masts of dugouts, huts, and fences, but especially clinting (constructions of bamboo filled in with lime) are made of it. The young shoots are said to be edible, and the sweet sap is supposed to be an agreeable drink. In Casamance a small species of bamboo grows in shady places; pipestems are made of it.

Begnefala (Andropogon shirensis). -- A tall gramineous plant with a penetrating aromatic odor. It is used in African medicine and the old colonials used it with success at the time of the great epidemic of yellow fever at Dakar in 1927. For fevers, one pounds the floral heads mixed with lemon or vinegar and energetically rubs the body with this mixture.

Hada (Imperata cylindrica). -- A gramineous plant with a very hard leaf and whitish ear, which is used for covering the roofs of huts.

Hat (Andropogon gayanus). -- Tall grass whose stem is used in making fences around huts.

Haham or cram-cram (Cenchrus biflorus). -- Its seeds fasten themselves to clothing and are very disagreeable. Is gathered and

/38 cont./

824 [262] [231]

eaten as couscous in the south of the Sahara.

Some Gramineae give very fine hay, but one must hurry to harvest them before the dryness is well established, for then the Gramineae quickly lose their leaves and become not very nourishing. Besides, these hays are worth far less than those of Europe, even comparing plants of the same species with each other. Finally, the best local hay is still groundnut straw.

J. B. Faur.
(Dakar.)